

California's 2003 Bear Harvest

by Cris Langner

The 2003 black bear hunting season closed according to the regulations on December 28, 2003. This was the second time in seven years that the season has run to its designated closure date—likely because of a 2001 regulation change that raised the in-season closure mechanism from 1,500 to 1,700 bears reported killed. A total of 22,331 bear tags were sold in 2003, and 1,650 black bears were reported taken. The overall hunter success rate was 7.4 percent.

Once again, success rates for the different hunting methods varied only marginally in 2003 compared to previous years. Hunters with trailing hounds took 813 bears (49.3 percent), which is down from 2002 but still representing about half the kills. Hunters took 522 bears (31.6 percent) while they were deer hunting, a slight decrease from last year. Archery hunters accounted for only 76 kills, down about one percent from last year, while the number of hunters using guides increased from 4.6 percent to 6.2 percent (103 kills).

Ninety-one percent of successful hunters, and 2.7 percent of unsuccessful bear hunters, indicated the number of days they spent hunting on their report cards. Successful hunters spent an average of 4.5 days, and unsuccessful hunters an average of 7.5 days hunting bear. A total of 227 (13.8 percent) successful bear hunters said they had taken bears on private land. This is down almost 8 percent from 2002, which means more bears are being taken on public lands. Preliminary numbers, as of March 2004, show that premolar teeth were collected from 1,066 (64.6 percent) of the bears harvested.

Again in 2003 the general bear season and deer season overlapped in the A, B, C, D, and some of the X zones. Zones X-1 through X-7b opened on October 11th. During the general deer season hunters were limited to one dog per hunter. Regulation changes in 2002 continue to be the primary factor affecting tag sales, season closure, and changes in the proportions of bear take by hunting method.

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| County | 2003 Black Bear Take | | | |
|--|----------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Males | Females | Unknown | Total |
| Northern California-North Coast Region | | | | |
| Del Norte | 13 | 8 | 0 | 21 |
| Humboldt | 60 | 52 | 0 | 112 |
| Lassen | 15 | 10 | 1 | 26 |
| Modoc | 2 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Shasta | 84 | 58 | 0 | 142 |
| Siskiyou | 129 | 59 | 1 | 189 |
| Tehama | 38 | 29 | 0 | 67 |
| Trinity | 119 | 82 | 0 | 201 |
| Subtotal | 460 | 299 | 2 | 761 |
| % of Take | 27.8% | 18.1% | 0.1% | 46.1% |
| Sacramento Valley-Central Sierra Region | | | | |
| Alpine | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Amador | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Butte | 33 | 12 | 0 | 45 |
| Calaveras | 10 | 9 | 0 | 19 |
| Colusa | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| El Dorado | 42 | 19 | 0 | 61 |
| Glenn | 18 | 9 | 0 | 27 |
| Nevada | 9 | 6 | 0 | 15 |
| Placer | 24 | 14 | 0 | 38 |
| Plumas | 33 | 28 | 0 | 61 |
| Sierra | 12 | 3 | 1 | 16 |
| Yolo | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Yuba | 7 | 5 | 0 | 12 |
| Subtotal | 198 | 106 | 1 | 305 |
| % of Take | 12.0% | 6.4% | .06% | 18.5% |
| Central Coast Region | | | | |
| Lake | 2 | 3 | 0 | 5 |
| Mendocino | 44 | 30 | 0 | 74 |
| S. Luis Obispo | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Subtotal | 46 | 33 | 0 | 79 |
| % of Take | 2.8% | 2.0% | 0.0% | 4.8% |
| San Joaquin Valley-Southern Sierra | | | | |
| Fresno | 46 | 39 | 0 | 85 |
| Kern | 38 | 27 | 0 | 65 |
| Madera | 22 | 18 | 0 | 40 |
| Mariposa | 11 | 13 | 0 | 24 |
| Stanislaus | 1 | 2 | 0 | 3 |
| Tulare | 111 | 41 | 0 | 152 |
| Tuolumne | 43 | 20 | 0 | 63 |
| Subtotal | 272 | 160 | 0 | 432 |
| % of Take | 16.5% | 9.7% | 0.0% | 26.2% |
| South Coast Region | | | | |
| Los Angeles | 5 | 4 | 0 | 9 |
| Santa Barbara | 5 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| Ventura | 7 | 7 | 0 | 14 |
| Subtotal | 17 | 14 | 0 | 31 |
| % of Take | 1.0% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 1.9% |
| Eastern Sierra-Inland Deserts Region | | | | |
| Inyo | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Mono | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Riverside | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| San Bernardino | 23 | 7 | 0 | 30 |
| Unknown | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Subtotal | 29 | 13 | 0 | 42 |
| % of Take | 1.8% | 0.8% | 0.0% | 2.5% |
| Statewide Totals | 1,022 | 625 | 3 | 1,650 |
| Statewide % of Take | 61.9% | 37.9% | 0.2 | 100% |